



Spring 2008

Planner's Page

Virginia's Transportation Planning Communiqué

2008 General Assembly Highlights



The 2008 General Assembly considered almost 2400 legislative bills and 950 resolutions during their recent 66 day session. They reconvene April 23 to consider modifications recommended by Governor Kaine. Key legislation focused on social issues including enhancing mental health services, health insurance coverage and education. Initially, the larger funding issues included drawing on the state's "rainy day funds" for the current fiscal year due to reduced revenues from the downturn of the economy, repealing the Virginia abusive driver fees and authorizing bonds to provide education and mental health capital improvements.

However, serious transportation funding problems surfaced in the last few weeks of the legislative session that warrant remedies from the General Assembly. The repeal of abusive driver fees, combined with the declining economy, is cumulatively impacting the Six-Year Program by \$1.1 billion and will compel yearly reductions in funding allocations by approximately 10 percent for transit, and approximately 44 percent for primary, secondary and urban road construction. Key legislation is summarized in subsequent pages.

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VA Supreme Court rules transportation authority fees unconstitutional

On February 29, the Supreme Court of Virginia ruled that the creation of a regional transportation authority to levy taxes was unconstitutional. The court declared that the General Assembly may not delegate its taxing authority to a non-elected body, impacting the powers granted to the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and Hampton Roads Transportation Authority in HB 3202 (2007).



KEY LEGISLATION

Abusive Driver Fees – Two bills passed that repeal 46.2-206.1 relating to the imposition of civil remedial fees on certain drivers. (HB 1243 and SB 1)

Access Management Regulations – Two bills passed that promulgate access management standards that VDOT is in the process of developing in two phases. Standards related to principal arterial roads shall become effective July 1, 2008 (not subject to APA) and standards relating to minor arterial and collector roads shall become effective October 1, 2009 (subject to APA). (HB 1572 and SB 370)

Tolls

Two bills passed that prohibit the CTB from imposing or collecting tolls on the Interstate that includes all or any portion of I-81 without prior approval of the General Assembly. (HB 1516 and SB 754)

HB 451: Composition of Northern Virginia Transportation Authority Membership – Increases the membership from 16 to 17 by adding a town representative who shall serve as a voting member.

HB 1578: Northern Virginia Transportation Authority – Declares null and void provisions from Chapter 896 of the 2007 Acts of Assembly relating to taxes and fees imposed by the NOVA Authority.

HB 454/SB 570: HOT Lanes - Revises procedures for enforcement of HOT lane violations.

HB 1014: HOV Lanes -Extends until July 1, 2009 the sunset provision for allowing vehicles bearing clean fuel license plates to use the HOV lanes regardless of the number of passengers.

see GENERAL ASSEMBLY page 3

Linking Planning, Safety and Operations

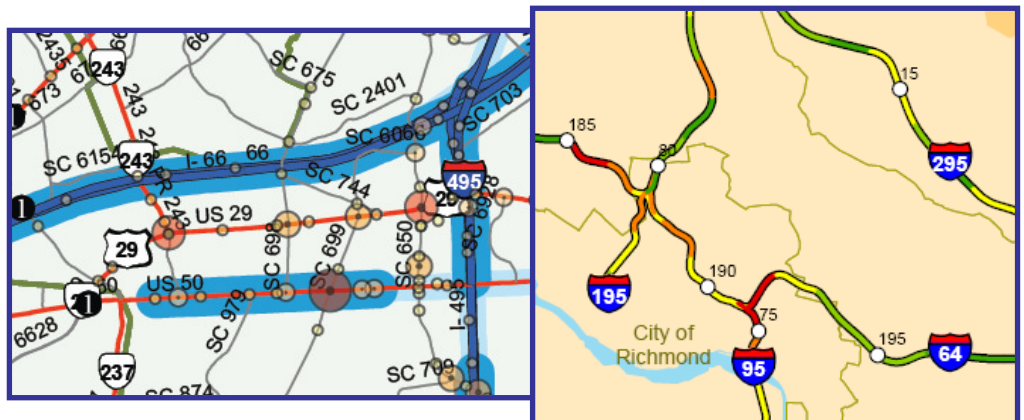
STARS (Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions) is a safety and congestion program that partners state, planning district and local transportation planners, traffic engineers, safety engineers and operations staff to identify “hot spots” along roadways where safety and congestion problems overlap (see graphics below) and are suitable for short term operational improvements.

At the core of this new program is an innovative, GIS-based methodology that analyzes and assists with the identification and prioritization of the critical safety and congestion locations in each of Virginia’s five Systems Operations Regions.

- The major goals of the STARS program are to identify roadway improvements that:
 - are relatively low in cost with no more than \$2,000,000 for a primary project and \$5,000,000+ for an interstate project,
 - address existing mobility and safety problem areas,
 - require minimal PE and right-of-way, and
 - can be implemented quickly, with a goal of 24 months or less.
- Examples of countermeasures include:
 - Access Management – consolidate entrances, close cross-overs
 - Reconfigure/reconstruct intersections – install roundabouts, realign approaches, optimize signal systems
 - Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations
 - Install shoulders or medians
 - Signage and pavement markings
 - Improve sight distance
 - ITS solutions
 - Turn Lanes – construction or extension
 - Roadway lighting
 - Ramps – extend acceleration or deceleration lanes

A consultant team has been retained to lead regional operational teams in conducting a road safety assessment on each hot spot location, and then to develop project improvements and countermeasures. The top STARS projects will be recommended for quick implementation as candidates for the SYIP.

In addition to STARS, VDOT has provided maps of high crash locations to the Virginia State Police to assist them in targeting their upcoming enforcement efforts.



UPCOMING EVENTS (TRAINING AND CLASSES)

[LTAP- Designing for Bicycles](#) April 28 | Charlottesville VA

[LTAP- Site Impact Analysis](#) April 29-30 | Charlottesville VA

[LTAP- Economic Evaluation of Public Projects](#) May 5 | Chester VA

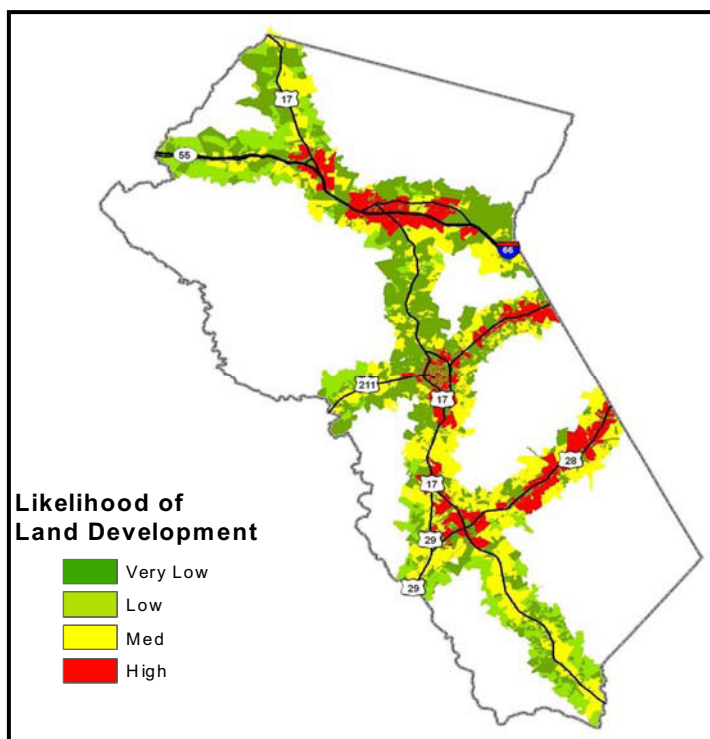
State Bicycle Plan



The State Bicycle Plan is being developed in three major components including a Policy Plan, U.S. Bicycle Route Plan and a Statewide Bicycle Route Plan. The focus of the State Bicycle Policy Plan is to define a vision, goals and objectives, and associated performance measures for bicycle accommodations in Virginia. The plan will build on the efforts of the VDOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Implementation Team and present a unified approach to improving the cycling environment in the Commonwealth. The purpose of the USBR 1 and 76 Plan is to identify the actions required to achieve and maintain acceptable bicycle levels of service through the 2035 planning horizon of the State Highway Plan. Recommendations in the USBR Plan will take into account the overall vision and long-term role of these routes as determined by the Policy Plan. The final component, the Statewide Bicycle Route Plan, will initiate the identification of a statewide bicycle route network and integrate it into VDOT's long-range transportation planning process.

Corridor Risk Assessment Phase II

In 2007, UVA's Center for Risk Management, in coordination with VDOT and VTRC, demonstrated for Fauquier County a GIS-based methodology to identify and prioritize highway sections that are at the highest risk for future development. The Phase 2 effort will provide training and implementation of the Phase 1 methodology that supports the identification, prioritization, and protection of transportation corridor sections that could face significant land development in five to ten years. The effort will be conducted in close partnership with the VDOT Transportation and Mobility Planning Division, the PDCs, and Virginia localities. For more information contact James Lambert at (434) 982-2072 or visit the project website at www.virginia.edu/crmes/corridorprotection



2008 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(continued)

HB 1478: Pedestrian Control Signals- Clarifies the criteria for special pedestrian control signals exhibiting the words, numbers, or symbols meaning "walk" or "don't walk"

HB 627: PPTA- Directs the responsible public entity, for any privately developed project with an estimated construction cost greater than \$50 million, to require the private entity to pay the costs for an independent audit of any and all traffic and cost estimates associated with the private entity's proposal.

HB 1116: Environmental Impact Reports- Requires environmental impact report to be completed on any major state construction project that will cost \$500,000 or more. The current threshold is \$100,000.

HJR 178: Urban Development Areas Report- Establishes a joint subcommittee to study development and land use tools in Virginia's localities.

HJR 194: Study Transportation Network of Hampton Roads- Establishes a 10 member joint subcommittee to study the transportation network of Hampton Roads.

SJR 92: Entities with Transportation Responsibility Report- Establishes a 6-member joint subcommittee to study the functions and authorities of entities with transportation responsibilities, with emphasis on the Hampton Roads region. The study will review the statutory functions of the federally mandated MPOs, PDCs and transportation authorities.

UPCOMING EVENTS (CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS)

[TRB- National Roundabout Conference](#) May 18-21, 2008 | Kansas City, Missouri

[TRB- Innovations in Travel Demand Forecasting - 2008](#) June 22-24, 2008 | Portland, Oregon

[TRB- 8th National Conference on Access Management](#) July 13-16, 2008 | Baltimore, Maryland

PROPOSED ACCESS MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS

The access management regulation developed by VDOT and approved by the Commissioner will be implemented in two phases:

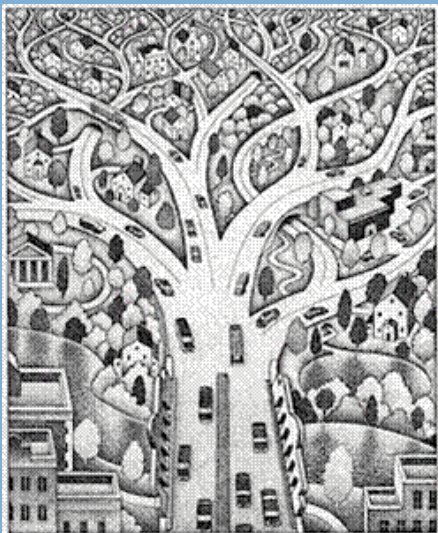
Phase I – Principal Arterials

The first phase allows the regulations and spacing standards for entrances developed to take effect July 1, 2008, but they will only apply to VDOT highways that are classified by the Commissioner as a principal arterial.

Phase II – Minor Arterials and Collectors

The second phase involves the promulgation according to the APA public review process, of access management regulations and entrance spacing standards for VDOT highways classified as a minor arterial, collector, or local to take effect October 1, 2009.

For more information visit the web at:
[Proposed Access Management Regulations and Standards](#)



Improving the Programming Process – Focus on the STIP

Improving the programming process and management of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) have been key priorities for transportation staff over the past year as evidenced by several initiatives.

Grouping of Projects – Grouping projects provides increased flexibility in managing the STIP/TIP. It enables VDOT and our partners to more quickly address changing situations for smaller scale projects (i.e. safety projects) by enabling re-prioritization of projects or changing funding for such projects to reflect changing conditions. Grouping projects will also reduce the number of STIP amendments processed by the MPOs, VDOT, VDRPT, FHWA, and FTA allowing us to collectively place more emphasis on accelerating project delivery. Highway projects eligible for a Categorical Exclusion (CE) may be grouped by function, work type, and/or geographic area. For air quality non-attainment/maintenance areas, only those highway projects that are exempt from conformity requirements may be grouped. If a project cannot qualify for a CE or be considered exempt from air quality conformity, then it always must be individually listed.

STIP Memorandum of Understanding - In late March, FHWA and FTA approved the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Procedures Memorandum of Agreement. The agreement establishes procedures to streamline and effectively manage the STIP. MPOs are being asked to pass a resolution in support of the new STIP MOA. A majority of MPOs have passed a resolution in support.

New MPO PL and Rural PDC SPR Funding Formats for FY 2009

VDOT's Transportation and Mobility Planning Division will be using a new format for the MPO PL and Rural PDC SPR funding agreements this year. The new agreements are based largely on the previous annual agreements, and will provide coverage for all federal and state funding used for transportation planning activities within the MPO and PDC areas.

The new agreements will be good for five years, and funding amounts will be conveyed annually through letter of authorization (LOA). Items such as mileage reimbursement rates, which change frequently, will be included as attachments to the master agreement, so that re-execution of the agreements is no longer required with an update.

These new funding agreements will be provided to the MPOs and PDCs in the coming month. This year, execution of the agreement and signature for the LOAs will be required. In subsequent years, only the LOAs will need to be signed. The master agreements will be reviewed annually for any necessary code updates. This change is being made to facilitate the administration of the Metropolitan and Rural Planning Programs. If you have any questions, please contact Ben Mannell at (804) 786-2971.

SPRING PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR SIX YEAR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM SCHEDULED

Lynchburg

Wed., April 16 at 5 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Select Downtown

Bristol

Mon., April 21 at 6 p.m. at the District Auditorium

Richmond

Wed., April 23 at 6 p.m. at the Central Office Auditorium

Hampton Roads

Thurs., April 24 at 6 p.m. at the Planning District Commission

Staunton

Wed., April 30 at 6 p.m. at the Rockingham Co. Government Center

Northern Virginia

Wed., May 14 at 7:30 p.m. at NoVA Community College

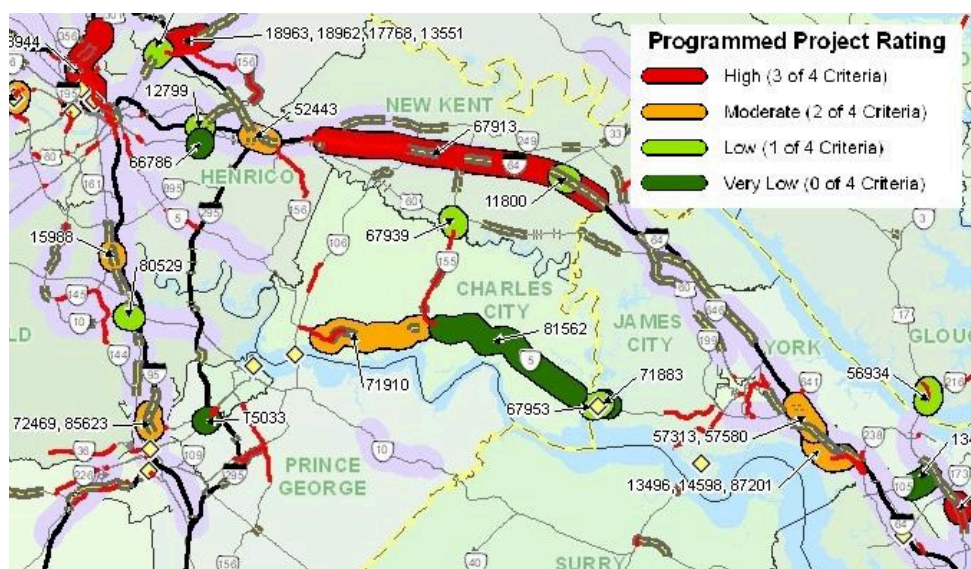
New GIS Tool for Determining Priorities

VDOT planning staff has developed an innovative approach to evaluate currently programmed projects and assist in determining priorities for the upcoming FY09-14 Six-Year Improvement Program. This assessment is a GIS based approach that compares each project location against four criteria:

1. **Current Day Congestion (CDC)** – based on 2005 traffic counts, TMPD mapped Interstate and primaries facilities that experience poor peak period level of service. For the purposes of this effort, congestion was defined as LOS E and F for urban areas and LOS D, E, and F for rural areas.
2. **Candidate Highway Safety Corridors (HSC)** – based on 2002-2004 crash data, the Traffic Engineering Division designated candidate highway safety corridors. These corridors were defined as having a significantly higher crash frequency than the regional average. These corridors were mapped.
3. **2007 Bridge Sufficiency Ratings (BSR)** – Using the BSR data available from the Asset Management Division, TMPD mapped all bridges on the interstate and primary systems with a BSR of 20 or below.
4. **2007 Pavement Conditions (PAV)** – Using the surface data available from the Asset Management Division, TMPD mapped all those corridors on the interstate and primary systems rated as “Very Poor.”

These four criteria (congestion, safety, pavement condition, and bridge ratings) were then compared against the listing of major programming projects prepared by each VDOT Construction District that was used during the 2007 Fall Transportation Meetings. Using this spatial comparison, projects were categorized into one of three categories – High, Moderate and Low. Projects in the **High** category met three of the criteria and are denoted in dark red. Projects in the **Moderate** category met two of the four criteria and are indicated in orange. Projects in the **Low** category met only one of the four criteria and are shown in light green. And finally, projects that did not meet any of the criteria are grouped in the **Very Low** category and are shown in dark green.

The approach above results in a very easy to read, visual tool (see below) that be may used by decision makers (CTB, MPOs, localities, and VDOT) to assist in the development of the FY09-14 SYIP. Contact Ross Hudnall at 786-2877 for more information.



SPOTLIGHT ON SPS –DATA

VDOT's Transportation and Mobility Planning Division uses the Statewide Planning System (SPS), which is the official data warehouse for the following:

1. FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

- DETERMINES FEDERAL FUNDING
- DETERMINES DESIGN TYPE
- MAY BE USED FOR APPLYING FUTURE ACCESS MANAGEMENT STANDARDS
- ASSISTS IN DETERMINING EMERGENCY EVACUATION ROUTES

2. NATIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM

- ESTABLISHES ROUTES IMPORTANT TO THE NATION'S ECONOMY, DEFENSE, AND MOBILITY

3. HPMS

- DETERMINES AMOUNT OF FEDERAL APPORTIONMENT FUNDS STATEWIDE

4. PARK-N-RIDE LOTS

5. TRAFFIC FORECASTS

- DETERMINE DESIGN FEATURES

6. BICYCLE / PEDESTRIAN FACILITY DESIGNATIONS

7. MPO STUDY AREA AND MPO BOUNDARIES

8. FUTURE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- PROJECT PRIORITIZATION
- ESTIMATE OF FUNDS NEEDED
- DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

9. REPORTING CURRENT PERFORMANCE

10. REGIONAL LONG RANGE PLANS

- TRAVEL DEMAND MODEL NETWORK DEVELOPMENT
- TRAVEL DEMAND MODEL DEVELOPMENT
- TRAVEL DEMAND MODEL VALIDATION

11. AIR QUALITY ANALYSIS

- STATE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (SIP)
- AIR SHED DATA

NEW ROUND OF MULTIMODAL OFFICE GRANTS

The 2008 Multimodal Planning Office grant program received 32 applications requesting over \$4 million. The program awarded 15 grants totaling \$1.5 million in categories such as land use, freight and transit. This year's innovative applications included 3 freight studies, a bus rapid transit feasibility study and a ferry route proving exercise, which is the equivalent to the travel time runs conducted by VDOT. Six grantees have opted to use the Multimodal Planning Office on-call consultant to conduct their study. For a list of awards please visit the Multimodal Planning Office website at <http://www.vtrans.org>

Reminder: SAFETEA-LU Financial Plan Requirements



SAFETEA-LU planning regulations require that transportation improvement programs and metropolitan long range transportation plans shall have specific financial plans that demonstrate fiscal constraint. Tables must identify, for all involved sources of funding, the planned obligation authority dollar amount (committed and reasonably available revenue estimates) next to the planned obligation dollar amounts (expected costs). The tables for programs should be similar to the [STIP summary Table C](#), yet they should include all funding source categories such as bonds, tolls, local and/or private funds, and have the applicable full number of TIP years (four or more). Remember also to include systems-level financial estimates that support essential maintenance and operation activities. In those areas with air quality history problems, the funding to be used in the first two years must be available or committed. Financial information for completing important large projects or large project phases that have schedules extending beyond the horizon span of a plan or a program should be noted in the documentation.

The dollar revenue and cost amounts must reflect year-of-expenditure estimates (show inflation). The financial plans for programs shall show comparisons of revenue and costs year-by-year and in total, whereas financial plans for metropolitan transportation plans shall show comparisons over interval periods of years, banded in groups, and in total.

Incidentally, similar project-level financial plans are required in state and federal law for those project actions estimated to cost at or over \$100 million. Such project level financial plans should be consistent with the systems level estimates for plans and programs. For more information call Chad Tucker at (804) 786-2874.

VDOT Safe Routes to School Program

Since 2006, Virginia has been administering this federally-funded program to encourage and enable children to walk and bike to school safely. Created through SAFETEA-LU legislation, the [VDOT Safe Routes to School \(SRTS\) Program](#) provides funding opportunities to localities, schools, and non-profit groups to promote active travel for students in kindergarten through eighth grade (K-8) going from home to school. The reimbursement program provides non-infrastructure funding to create programs that both encourage and enable kids to bike and walk to school by assessing local conditions, planning for non-motorized accommodations and safety countermeasures, and implementing activities that encourage greater community involvement in walking and biking as school travel options. Funding for infrastructure projects that enhance the walking and biking environment for students and/or which implement safety countermeasures is also available. In May, VDOT kicks off the 2008 application cycle for SRTS proposals. For more information, please contact Statewide Safe Routes to School Coordinator Sarah Weisiger at 804-371-4868.



GIS CONFERENCE

2008 Annual VAMLIS GIS conference (sponsored by): ESRI, Timmons Group, VITA – VGIN.

Omni Hotel and Conference Center in Charlottesville, VA

May 5th – May 7th

<http://www.vamlisconference.com/>

